

## **Aurangzeb: The Life and Legacy of India's Most Controversial King**

Audrey Truschke, **Aurangzeb: The Life and Legacy of India's Most Controversial King**, California: Stanford University Press, 2017, 152 pp.

Reviewed by: Mr. Abdul Basit\*

Audrey Truschke's book "AUGANZEB" is a concise and comprehensive biography and important contribution on Mughal King Aurangzeb. The author interestingly designates Aurangzeb a controversial personality, the unison of piety and bigotry at least in the eyes of history. Factually Aurangzeb is buried under the false assumptions and biased opinions of historians which have made him obscure and hazy. Truschke endeavored to dig real features of Aurangzeb and analyzed authenticity of controversies about him. She also emphasized that Aurangzeb must be understood in the light of Mughal era not in the obligations of recent times (p. 19-25).

Aurangzeb was the sixth ruler of the Mughal Empire. He studied Islamic religious texts, including the Quran, hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), and religious biographies. Mughal princely education emphasized the Persian classics, especially the great poets and scholars that are still beloved today, such as Sa'adi, Nasiruddin Tusi, and Hafiz. Aurangzeb is rumored to have been especially fond of Rumi's Masnavi. These Persian works shaped the ethics and values of Mughal princes, especially their ideas about justice, adab and akhlaq, and kingship (p. 26). The king also had strong links with Islamic Sufi communities, another time-honored Mughal tradition, as evidenced by his burial at a Chishti shrine in Maharashtra. At his court, Muslim scholars completed the massive intellectual project Fatawa-i- Alamgiri, a synthesis of Hanafi legal judgment under the supervision of Aurangzeb in 1675, during its completion Aurangzeb heard parts of the work.

Truschke contended that many commentators have spread the myth of the bigoted, evil Aurangzeb on the basis of shocking thin evidence (p.

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18). Many false ideas still mar popular memory of Aurangzeb, including that he massacred millions of Hindus and destroyed thousands of Temples. Neither of these commonly believed “Facts” is supported by historical evidence, although some scholars have attempted, usually in bad faith, to provide an alleged basis for such tall tales.

Moreover, Truschke argued that of course, no one would contend that Aurangzeb was without faults. It is not difficult to identify specific actions taken by Aurangzeb that don't meet modern democratic, egalitarian, and human rights standards. Aurangzeb ruled in a premodern world of kingdoms and empires, and his ideas about violence, state authority, and everything else were conditioned by the time and place in which he lived. Aurangzeb's approach to religion was hardly puritanical. He consulted with prominent Hindu religious figures throughout his life, as had earlier Mughal kings (p. 18). The author reveals that Aurangzeb issued many orders to protecting Hindu temples and granted stipends and land to Brahmins and also employed more Hindus in his administration than any prior Mughal ruler by a substantial margin (p. 60). Likewise, the author Divulges that in 1659 Aurangzeb issued an imperial order to local Mughal officials of Benares that ‘you must see that nobody unlawfully disturbs the Brahmins or other Hindus of that region, so that they might remain in their traditional places and pray for the continuance of the Empire’ (p. 81).

The author tells about the condition that, bans and restrictions numbered among the most common types of state policies that Aurangzeb used to promote morality among those living in Mughal Empire. At different points in his reign Aurangzeb tried to limit or bar the following vices: alcohol, opium, prostitution, gambling, inflammatory theological writings, and public celebrations of religious festivals (p. 74). The justification and goal of such restrictions were the same: public and individual ethics. Basic concerns with state security also motivated some provisions, which then became tools for making Mughal India, in theory, an ethical and secure kingdom.

Truschke argued that Aurangzeb was an enigmatic king and he is also live wire of history that sparks fires in the present day. Current popular visions of Aurangzeb are fiction than reality (p. 15). Moreover,

she quoted from here book Khafi Khans' views about Aurangzeb, who is the laudatory eighteenth century historian of Aurangzeb's reign, who compared the ruler to Jamshid, a legendary monarch in the Persian tradition. "To attempt a summary of the major events of a fifty-year reign of an emperor the equal of Jamshid is to measure the ocean's water with a pitcher," the author observes. There remains much to say about this fascinating King and the kingdom that he ruled. Once we clear away the chaff of Aurangzeb the myth, we can confront the fascinating puzzle of Aurangzeb the king, a pivotal figure in the Indian medieval past (p. 104). Truschke felt that, we remain in the dark about many aspects of Aurangzeb's reign that are pertinent to discerning his potential role in hollowing out the Mughal state (p. 101).

This book is a good recommendation for students and people who want to learn about Aurangzeb. It is a good contribution to discover the real and historical Aurangzeb. The author has also challenged the allegations and fabricated narratives of the historians about Aurangzeb and gave them answers logically. We need a fresh narrative about Aurangzeb and must use such work with caution appreciating about her literacy and historical facets in order to responsibly reconstruct Mughal history.